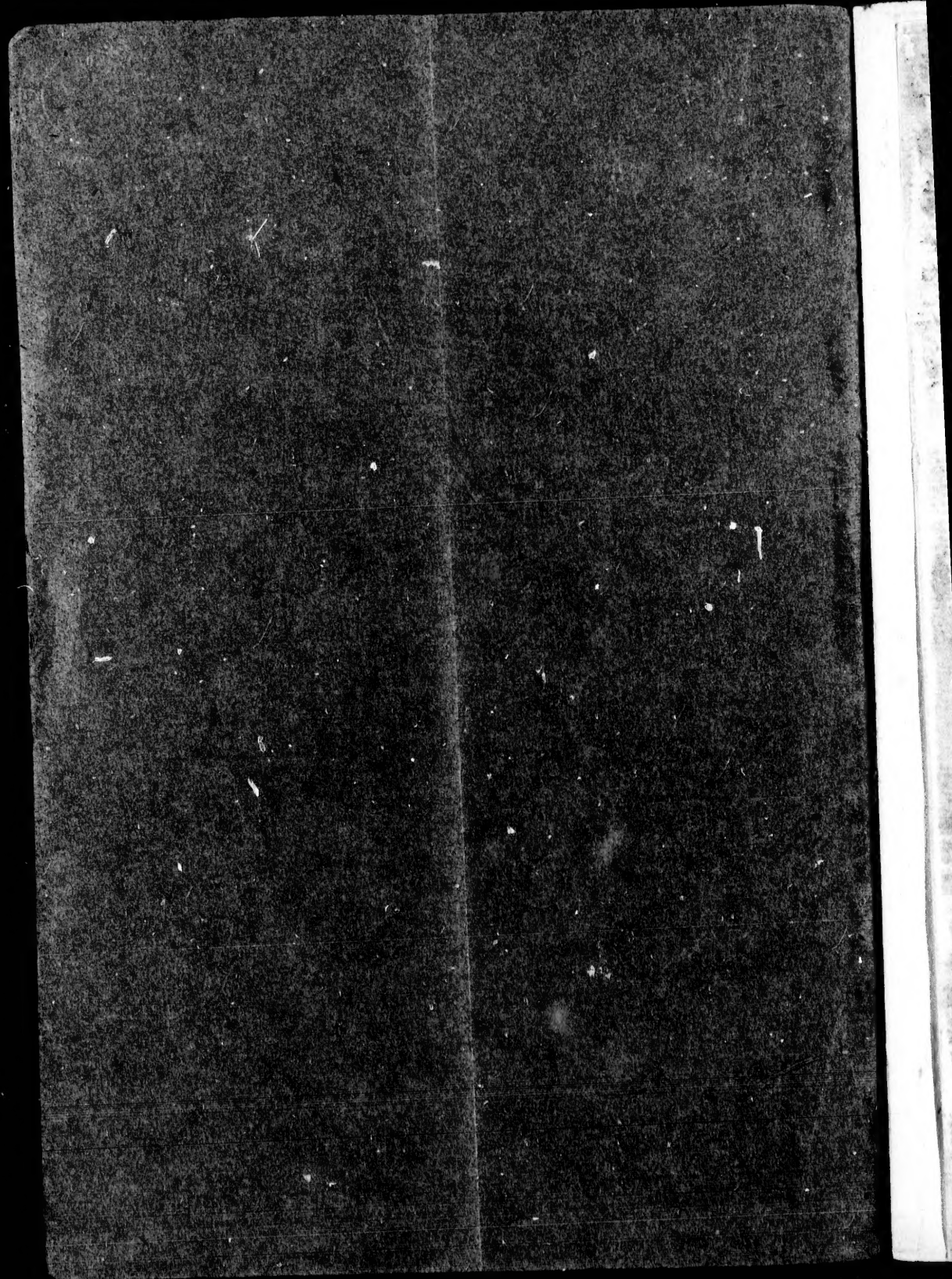


"It is pre-ordained that nations, like individuals, shall struggle for existence; and a beneficent Providence has so ordered that out of the struggle shall come strength and greatness."



GUELPH, Co. Wellington, August 25, 1866.

SIR—

At a large and influential public meeting held in this Town, on the 15th inst., relative to the formation of Rifle Associations, Dr. Howitt read an address on the general formation of such Associations with regard to the defence of these Provinces. The meeting approved of his views, and unanimously passed the following resolutions:

RESOLVED—"That this meeting cordially approve of the general features of the scheme propounded by Dr. Howitt for the formation of Rifle Associations, and that with the view of carrying it into effect, a committee composed of the following gentlemen are requested and empowered to communicate with the Militia Department, and report at a subsequent meeting what are the views of the Department with respect to such organization:—Peter Gow, Esq., Mayor, D. Stirton, Esq., M. P. P., Geo. Elliott, Esq., ex-Warden, H. W. Peterson, Esq., Reeve, Messrs. W. S. G. Knowles, John Harris, jr., G. B. Fraser, A. A. Baker, E. Newton, James Hazelton, E. Morris, Judge Macdonald and the mover, with power to add to their number."

RESOLVED—"That the committee circulate the scheme propounded by Dr. Howitt in such a way as may be most advisable, with the view of procuring the co-operation of other parts of the Province, to facilitate its developement and general adoption."

This Committee met on Tuesday evening last, when D. Stirton, Esq., M. P. P., acting as Chairman, and E. Newton, Esq., as Secretary, the following resolution was proposed and carried unanimously:

RESOLVED—"That 1,000 copies of the address of Dr. Howitt on the formation of Rifle Associations for the defence of the country be printed in pamphlet form forthwith, and that copies be sent to the Members of both branches of the Legislature, the editors of all the leading newspapers in the Province, Captains of volunteer companies, and heads of municipalities, soliciting their co-operation in the movement, and that George Elliott, (ex-Warden), A. A. Baker, J. Gow, Esqs., and the Secretary, be a sub-committee to see the foregoing carried into effect."

We, the undersigned members of the sub-committee, therefore earnestly desire to call your attention to the views embodied in the following address. The scheme propounded is not regarded, either by its author or by ourselves, as perfect. But we believe that it is only by the adoption of some such plan as is here fore-shadowed, that the country can attain that sense of security which is so desirable. We solicit your co-operation in the matter, and would thankfully receive any suggestions, or modifications, that would lead to its more perfect developement, and to its speedy adoption.—We may state that should the public generally give it that approval which it has universally elicited in this County, it will soon be turned to practical account.

GEORGE ELLIOTT,
A. A. BAKER,
JAMES GOW,
EDWIN NEWTON.

AN ADDRESS

ON THE FORMATION OF RIFLE ASSOCIATIONS FOR DEFENSIVE PURPOSES,
DELIVERED IN THE TOWN HALL, GUELPH, ON WEDNESDAY
EVENING, THE 15TH OF AUGUST, 1866,

BY DR. HOWITT.

Mr. Chairman and Gentlemen.

THE people of these Provinces, with few exceptions, are inspired with a profound feeling of love for Great Britain, and for the land which they inhabit. The good and glorious sentiment prevails that we owe a debt of gratitude to the former, and possess privileges in the latter which neither persuasion nor coercion will ever induce us to forget or surrender. "England and Canada" is our cry and watchword. Actuated by this feeling, the most earnest desire pervades all classes to see this country placed in such a position that it not only shall have nothing to fear from the filibustering incursions of a few miserable Fenians, but that our birthright shall be secure even though we should have to contend against that gigantic power from which alone we have anything to dread. In other words, if in the inscrutable dispensations of Providence war should ever arise with the United States, the most anxious desire is, that our defensive arrangements may be so perfected that we may come out of the struggle without losing a jot of our rights or surrendering a foot of our territory. There are a few among us who, relying on the strong arm of Fatherland, see no great necessity for extensive defensive preparations. There are a few, too, who may be designated as the no-danger men; who ridicule all defensive preparations as absurd, because the chances of war, they consider, are so remote as not to be calculated on in the chapter of accidents. Likewise there are a few who, though ardently attached to British institutions and to British connection, believe it would be futile to contend with a tremendous power like that of the American Union. The influence of these parties—insignificant though they be

—is prejudicial to our safety. To the first I feel free to state, that no matter how mighty and terrible would be British prowess, backed by Britain's vast resources, it is simply preposterous to imagine that Canada would not be wrested from her grasp if Canadians failed in their duty. As regards the second, I shall content myself with saying, that if this country is to continue forever in a state of peace, we shall constitute the first example in the history of the world of a people existing in close proximity to a great and ambitious nation, that had not to struggle for its existence. To return an answer to the third party will involve an examination of the very question for the consideration of which we have met this evening, namely, How is this country to be successfully defended? I think it will be generally conceded by those who have made this question a matter of serious thought and reflection, that the resources of these provinces are too limited to keep up a sufficient military organization to render them secure against anything beyond a mere filibustering invasion; that if war should ever unhappily occur, our only safety would be in the resistance which the masses—the bone and sinew of the country—could offer to the aggressive foe. Let it not for a moment be inferred that there is the slightest desire to disparage the present volunteer organization, or that under the contingency just mentioned, that organization would fail to render not only essential but indispensable service. On the contrary, it is abundantly apparent that without some such an organization all effort for defensive purposes would almost inevitably end in confusion and failure. Our volunteer companies are rapidly becoming well drilled—capable of taking the field and rendering services

equal to those of soldiers of the line.— And to say that such men upon the field would not prove more effective than men just taken from the plough or the workshop is too absurd for consideration. But what we contend for is, that no matter how effective may be our volunteers, they, though aided by such troops as Great Britain may maintain in the provinces, or be enabled to dispatch to our assistance, must ever prove an inadequate force to contend with a power capable of putting hundreds of thousands in the field. Against such a numerous foe what would be 20,000 or 30,000 volunteers and as many troops of the line? The odds are so tremendous as to render the result too painfully certain. With this startling and momentous fact constantly forcing itself on the mind, all earnest men who love their country and estimate at their proper value the privileges they possess are incessantly asking themselves the question—How is it possible to prepare these provinces so that in the terrible event of war they would be enabled to come out of the contest with success? And the answer which suggests itself to almost every one is that some scheme must be devised to render the whole force of the country in some measure efficient and available. But to show how this is to be done as far as I am aware no method has been publicly propounded. The population of the provinces is comparatively small, and consequently the greater necessity of having the inhabitants prepared to resist aggression to the best advantage. On the other hand the resources are extremely limited, consequently the difficulty of maintaining adequate preparation. This is the dilemma in which we are placed. We want to be defended, and we want to avoid expense as far as is consistent with our safety. Not only do we want to avoid direct outlay, but we require to economise time, and hence the impossibility of pushing the volunteer movement beyond a limited extent, since the necessary drill to which volunteer companies are subjected consumes more time than is at the disposal of the bulk of the inhabitants. We know that the preparations, to be of service, must be extensive, and we likewise know that our pecuniary resources are small. We want to develop the greatest amount of resisting force at the least possible outlay. In a word, we want to be safe without becoming bankrupt. Can this be effected? I, for my part, think it can.

It is an acknowledged fact, that in proportion as the inhabitants of a country are accustomed to the use of arms the difficulty of conquest is increased: and it would not be hard to prove that the most effective weapon for purposes of defence, especially in a country like ours (possessing many natural advantages, which would afford cover and protection for the defender,) is the rifle. During the American revolution this was fully exemplified, as well as during the war of 1812. Secreted in the forest and behind such barricades as a wooded country always supplies, the men who from their childhood had, through necessity, become habituated to the use of the rifle, proved in many instances more than a match for the thoroughly trained regular soldier. And when these provinces were invaded in 1812 it was owing to the same circumstances that the Canadian back-woodsman rendered such essential service. These two instances show that for defensive purposes the rifle has proved a most effective weapon, and a thorough acquaintance with its use has made even untrained men—while simply acting on the defensive, in some respects as effective as those who have been subjected to all the minutiae of drill. Now, if a knowledge of the use of the old-fashioned muzzle loading rifle has proved so advantageous to the defender, may we not safely predict that such knowledge of the present improved breech-loading weapon will secure to him at least equal advantages. Indeed, it requires but a moment's consideration to convince us that he would be rendered three-fold more effective against the invader, even though that invader were armed with the same weapon. Acting on the defensive, partial protection at least against the bullets of the foe can generally be secured, and one man thus protected, with a rifle capable of firing six or seven shots in a minute, would be equal to three or four men though similarly armed, who had to expose themselves to dislodge him from his position. I think it may be laid down as a principle, that the more perfect the rifle is rendered, the greater will be the difficulty of conquering a people who know how to handle it. When I first read of that terrible weapon known as "Gale's patent," and the equally terrible Snider gun, capable of discharging 15 or 16 shots a minute, it became clear to me that this country might look with confidence to the future, and be rendered safe

against all "comers," provided the people would make an earnest endeavor to secure the means of defence which Providence has placed within their reach. With a hundred and fifty thousand such rifles in the hands of a hundred and fifty thousand men who knew how to handle them, with such trained forces as are now organized or being organized, together with the assistance Fatherland would be able and willing to send us, we could hold our own against any power in the world. If this be a fact, and I think it is, surely it ought to stimulate every patriotic mind to inquire whether steps cannot be taken to attain its realization. I stand before you this evening at the request of some of my townsmen to propose a scheme which has for its object this consummation. The plan which I am about to propose I do not claim to be original. Had it only occurred to myself, I should doubt its feasibility, but as it has suggested itself, at least in part, to many others, for whose judgment and sound common sense I have the greatest respect, I am led to believe it possesses the elements of success. Although in the development of the scheme which is about to be proposed the aid of the Government will, to a certain extent, be required, the patriotic spirit which animates the people will be mainly relied on to carry it out.—It is indeed on the general prevalence and strength of this spirit that I found my hopes for its adoption and development.

Before introducing the scheme let me first reiterate its object. The object simply is to arm for defensive purposes a great part of the effective inhabitants of the country, with the most approved breech-loading rifle, and accustom them to its use without incurring any serious outlay on the part of the Government, or without making such a demand on the time of the people that would materially interfere with those industrial pursuits, upon which the prosperity of the country so much depends. It is proposed to attain this object by a joint action on the part of the different municipalities and the Government. It is upon the assumption that this co-operation can be secured that the plan is based. Without such co-operation the whole scheme falls to the ground. There is something which the municipalities must do, and there is something which the Government must do.

1. The different municipalities must appropriate annually a certain reasonable sum to be distributed as prizes. The prizes

to be awarded to the best "rifle shots" in the different municipalities.

2. The Government must supply the rifle to the different municipalities at something below cost price, and cartridges at cost-price; and at the same time appropriate annually a certain reasonable sum for prizes to be competed for by the best "marksmen" in the Provinces.

3. For every two or three municipalities some one must be appointed with a fixed salary, to be paid either by the Government or by the municipalities, who shall combine within himself the double function of Rifle Inspector and Rifle Instructor.

Assuming that this joint action on the part of the Government and the Municipalities can be secured we will proceed to the consideration of some of the details of the scheme.

The prize money contributed by each County or Riding would have to be divided into two portions. One portion to be appropriated for Township prizes, the other for County prizes. The successful competitors at the Township matches alone being allowed to compete at the County matches. This division might be so ordered that a County prize would be double that of a Township prize. Again the successful competitors at the County matches only should be allowed to compete for Provincial prizes. For illustration let us assume that the South Riding of Wellington, which is composed of four Townships, would vote the sum of \$1200 annually, and that our Government would be liberal enough to come down with, we will say, \$4,000. Of the \$1200 I would make two sums,—one of \$800 and the other of \$400. I would divide the \$800 into four equal parts. This would give us \$200 for each Township of the Riding. Out of each \$200, twelve prizes might be formed ranging from \$4 up to \$50. Of the remaining \$400 twelve County prizes likewise might be made, these would clearly range from \$8 up to \$100. And of the \$4,000 appropriated by Government there could be twelve prizes formed just ten times as large as the County prizes. The highest prize being \$1,000 and the lowest \$80. By this arrangement every competitor at a Township match would have a chance of carrying off one of twelve prizes, varying from \$4 to \$50, and every one who was successful would have a second chance of one of twelve prizes at the County match, varying from \$8 to \$100, and every fortunate competitor there would have the still further

chance of carrying off one of twelve Provincial prizes, varying from \$80 to \$1,000.*

Now I am convinced that the desire of competing for these prizes, coupled with the more laudable desire of possessing a weapon for the purpose of defending the land they so dearly love, would furnish a motive sufficiently powerful to induce most of our young men, especially in the more rural districts, and many of our older men too, to purchase that weapon at their own cost, and habituate themselves to its use, provided it could be obtained at a reasonable price, say for about ten dollars.

It is very clear that if Government could be induced to supply breech-loading rifles at this figure we should obtain them under cost price, so that each rifle would in reality be a joint purchase of the Government and the individual. By this a two-fold advantage would be secured.

1. It would give the Government a control over the weapon, which would enable them to prevent its falling into improper or incompetent hands. This would be insured, at least in almost every instance by making it a condition of purchase that the purchaser, whoever he be, should take the oath of allegiance, and likewise possess a certificate from the head of his Township or Municipality that in other respects he is a fit and proper person.

2. It would give the individual a more direct interest in the weapon, and consequently he would be more likely to take proper care of it. Moreover, few or none would possess themselves of it except those who were anxious to learn how to handle it effectively.

Provision should of course be made that persons possessing rifles should not be allowed to take them out of the country, or in any way dispose of them without the sanction of their respective municipalities. Provision should likewise be made to secure individual purchasers from loss, who were about to emigrate. This might be done by arranging it so that when a person was about to leave the country, he should be allowed to return his weapon to his municipality, receiving back the purchase money, with deduction proportionate to the injury it had sustained while in his hands.

To carry out the plan it will be necessary for the municipalities or counties to purchase the rifle from the government, and the individuals to purchase it from them. But how are the municipalities or counties to know how many rifles will be

required in their respective districts, so as to insure themselves from loss when they make a purchase of the government? It is clear that they cannot make a separate purchase for each individual applicant. To obviate this difficulty, it will be necessary for the different municipalities or counties to promote the formation of Rifle Clubs, and make it one of the conditions of purchase that the purchaser shall belong to a Club. Indeed, to render the scheme at all effective, the formation of these Clubs will be indispensable. Now, the school sections into which the different townships are divided will afford great facilities for forming Rifle Clubs. In every school section there would be, I apprehend, at least twenty and upwards who would desire to possess the weapon; these must form themselves into a Club, and choose their captain. The application for rifles to the County Councils or heads of the municipalities, should come from the captains of the different Clubs; and when a captain of a club makes an application, it should be understood that he renders himself responsible for the purchase. By adopting this course the county or municipality would always know beforehand the exact number of rifles that would be required.

I have said that, to render the scheme capable of effecting the object for which it would be instituted, the formation of Rifle Clubs would be indispensable. Because without them—

1. There would be a total want of order and organization.

2. It would be impossible to instruct the men in the use of the weapon.

3. It would be impossible to practice certain orders of firing which are sometimes requisite on the field.

You will remember that I before stated, to carry out the scheme, one salaried personage would be required for every county, or every two or three counties, who must combine within himself the double function of Rifle Inspector and Rifle Instructor. Amongst his other acquirements this person must possess a thorough knowledge of the mechanism of the rifle—of the principles upon which good shooting depends, and of all the different methods of firing which may be available in actual service. His duties would consist—

1. In inspecting the rifles possessed by the members of the clubs, at least twice a year. These semi-annual inspections might

* It is of course understood that Volunteer Companies of the different Municipalities will not be excluded from these competitions.

take place at some stated place in each township, to which every member should be compelled to repair on certain days, named by the Inspector himself. The object of this inspection would, of course, be to see that the rifles were kept in a proper condition. Should any member of a club present his weapon in a state calculated to prove prejudicial to its efficiency, a fine should be imposed, the amount of such fine depending on the degree of injury sustained by the weapon; for a second offence, it might be so ordered that he should forfeit it altogether.

2. It would be his duty to show the captains of the different clubs how the rifles are to be properly cleaned and kept clean, and, generally, how to keep them in an efficient condition. Upon the captains would devolve the duty of conveying the information thus obtained to the individual members of their respective clubs.

3. It would be his duty to instruct the captains in the general principles of rifle practice—expound to them the laws which must be observed to insure good shooting—acquaint them with the different methods of firing, and give them all such information on the subject as might, when imparted to the men, be of service to them on the field.

4. It would be his duty to visit every school section that had organized a club, and select a proper spot for practicing, and mark the different distances at which the shooting should take place.

5. It would be his duty to instruct the captains of the different clubs in digging rifle pits, constructing barricades of fences and of such materials, which are ever at hand in a wooded country; and generally in all such matters and things as might prove of advantage to them if suddenly called out on outpost duty.

6. It would be his duty, as far as in his power, to be present at and superintend the more general practicing in the different sections.

7. And, finally, it would be his duty to attend on all field days, when there were competitions for prizes, and act as general manager and umpire on those occasions.

This, then gentlemen is, in a few plain words, a brief general outline of the scheme which I came here to-night to propose. I am aware it is imperfect and open to many objections, still I cannot but flatter myself that it possesses elements which, if wrought out and adopted, would prove of essential service to the country in the event of war.

It will be seen that it could in no wise interfere with the present volunteer movement. On the contrary, it would rather give an impetus to that movement, by rendering the people familiar with the use of arms, and thus, to a certain extent, inspiring them with a martial spirit. Men who have made themselves proficient in the use of any weapon are ever prone to seek those positions where such proficiency is more likely to be called into requisition. It would indeed be fatal to the scheme if in anyway it would tend to damp that laudable ardor which now impels many of our young men to join Volunteer Companies, and subject themselves to all the laborious minutiae of drill, and stand ready at the call of duty to sacrifice their interests and imperil their lives for the safety of their country. This ardor we must stimulate by every means which lies in our power, for we cannot over estimate the value of the thoroughly trained, disciplined soldier. On the other hand, if the services which he is capable of rendering cannot be overrated, I think it is very easy to under-rate those which, on an emergency, might be rendered by men who had simply made themselves proficient in the use of the rifle. Moreover, if our Volunteer Companies are to be effective this proficiency must be attained by the individuals of those companies. Men may spend half a life-time in drilling and in performing evolutions on the field, still if they cannot handle the rifle skillfully, cannot send with something like the certainty of fate the bullet on its deadly mission, they will cut but a sorry figure even before a ragged Fenian rabble, who have acquired this art. We have had one example of this already, and I trust in God that it will be the last.—The disasters which attended the late skirmish at Ridgeway resulted, I verily believe, neither from incompetency of the officers, nor from want of pluck in the men, but simply from a consciousness on the part of most of them, that they did not know how to handle effectively the weapon they had in their hands. On the investigation of their commander's conduct on that occasion, it came out in evidence that numbers of those engaged had never before fired anything but blank cartridge, while others had not even so much as snapped a cap! Under such circumstances what could be expected but want of confidence, wavering, and ultimately confusion and retreat. Depend upon it, gentlemen, had the men, by previous practice been

able to make the best use of their weapons, that day would have proved far more disastrous to the rascally invader. To me it appears little short of murder to bring men unacquainted with the art of good shooting into the field where they have to face an enemy possessing this terrible advantage. Pluck and daring will avail nothing against the skilled use of the deadly repeater or the equally effective breech-loader. Men who have not acquired this skill can, when brought in presence of a foe that has, do little more than die manfully at their posts. In conclusion, permit me to enumerate some of the advantages which would be derived from the general adoption and development of the scheme which has been proposed.

1. The country would possess many thousands of the most approved rifles, which could be called into requisition in case of any sudden emergency.

2. These rifles would be in the hands of men competent to use them effectively,

3. These men, when drafted or when entering the Volunteer service, would only have to learn the drill to be rendered efficient soldiers, so that in case of any sudden call to arms, the country could, (with the regular troops maintained in the Provinces, together with our trained volunteers as a centre or nucleus of perfect organization,) by a few days drilling put in the field a vast, and most terribly effective army, for all purposes of defence.

4. The general rifle practice which would prevail throughout the country, with the avowed object of defending the country in case of necessity, would create a martial spirit which, if such necessity should ever unfortunately arise, would prove of the greatest advantage.

5. This general arming of the people

would create a sense of security which we do not now feel.

6. This general and spontaneous arming of the people for the purpose of defending their rights and privileges, would show to Great Britain that we value our birthright, and would consequently strengthen the bonds which unite us to her. Moreover, it would increase our credit abroad by showing to the foreign capitalist that Canada presented a field for secure and safe investments.

7. It would completely eradicate that egregious idea still entertained by many Americans that there is in these Provinces a large minority, if not a majority, who are favorable to annexation. It would show the American people should the desire of conquest, ever prompt them to invade us, that they would meet with the most determined, terrible, and effective resistance by the whole bulk of the inhabitants. Moreover, a war made upon us under these circumstances by them, with that object would be reprobated by the whole civilized world, for no greater national crime can be committed than the invasion of a prosperous and united people who only desire to enjoy their political privileges and civil rights in peace.

8. It would create a great national pastime that would go far to blend in harmonious unity the diverse and in some respects antagonistic elements of which the society of these Provinces is composed.

9. And finally it would still further strengthen that love of country which so generally prevails among us, and would inspire the rising generation with a stronger sense of patriotism by educating them in the idea that the land in which they live is worth fighting for, and if need be dying for.

GUELPH:

PRINTED AT THE MERCURY CHEAP BOOK AND JOB OFFICE, DAY'S BLOCK.

1866.

h we

ming
ding
w to
ight,
the
over,
d by
Ca-
safe

that
many
nces
who
ould
de-
in-
the
e re-
nabi-
n us
with
the
na-
the
peo-
tical

pas-
arm-
re-
the

.
ther
n so
ould
nger
n in
live
ying